



Driver Selection

An 18-year-old, who had recently graduated from high school and was soon to be headed off to college, volunteered to drive some of the youth group participants across town to go bowling. Though the church had a rule prohibiting any of the youth group members from driving, they felt he no longer fit into that category.

Two youngsters piled into his car and off they went. Moments later, the teen driver with the young boys raced up the exit ramp at a high rate of speed, slid out of control and struck a light pole. Fortunately, nobody was killed. Unfortunately, the two passengers had serious injuries and recovery will take years.

Every week in churches across America, parents and youth leaders are asking, “Who should be allowed to drive to youth events?” And the broader questions emerges, “Should anyone who volunteers be allowed to drive members to and from events?”

Next to selecting a safe vehicle, driver selection is critical to ensure the safe transportation program. Exactly what should be considered?

Preapproved Drivers

Many church leaders could save themselves a great deal of stress if they would consider adopting a preselected driver list policy. By preapproving drivers and having enough names on it, churches will not have to run the risk of settling for “whoever volunteers.” There are a few important steps to the process.

First, once a year, the call should go out that you are in need of occasional drivers for youth and other church events. Whether you own your own church vehicles or not, it’s important to know who has the potential to serve as a driver when needed. Therefore, a short application is necessary. Drivers may indicate any special licenses they have. This will give the applicant and congregation an opportunity to know you take the safety of the people you transport seriously.

Most policies involving a driver’s age will indicate that drivers are to be within a particular age range. Obviously, there are some exceptions, but special attention should be paid to the experience and training a driver has behind the wheel. Also, check with your program administrator or annual conference for the policy restrictions.

Once the application is received, a motor vehicle report (MVR) should be run on the applicant. This will allow you to determine what offenses they may have had. Those with numerous infractions or serious violations should not be included on your approved driver listing. To avoid any embarrassment, let drivers know before they apply that you will run an MVR and will not select drivers with multiple or serious violations. This way, a person can choose not to apply.

Also, if there is any possibility that the drivers will be transporting minors, a background check should be administered. These checks may be done online at a very affordable rate. Please check with your program administrator, annual conference office or service center for additional information on the Trak-1 background screening product.

The important thing to remember—don’t include those with serious criminal records or motor vehicle violations on your list.

Once you get your approved list of drivers, you should be good to go for the remainder of the year—right? Not quite.

★ **Ministry Protection Memo** ★
“MPM” is a series on various topics relative to Church and safety. Send your comments and interests to AME Zion’s Director of Ministry Protection.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Neil Davidson
Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.
2850 Golf Road
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008-4050
630.285.3585
neil_davidson@ajg.com

or
David A. Aiken, Sr.
Executive Director
3225 W. Sugar Creek Road
Charlotte, NC 28269
704.714.1505
David.AikenSr_ZBS@amezhqtr.org

“Next to selecting a safe vehicle, driver selection is critical to ensure the safe transportation program.”



Training

Unfortunately, numerous accidents involve drivers who are unfamiliar with the vehicle they are asked to drive. Obviously, those driving larger buses need a commercial driver's license (CDL). Regardless, each driver should be briefed, trained and certified on each of the vehicles they will be driving. Again, regardless if it is a church-owned vehicle, the more familiar a driver is to backing up, turning, starting, stopping, lines-of-sight and blind spots, the better chances they will be able to safely drive.

Even after drivers have been trained, especially in church-owned vehicles, regular updates will help to reduce the chances of an accident. Both for the initial and ongoing training, it is best to document it in their file. This will also help if you are ever asked to testify in a courtroom situation.

Evaluation

Sometimes a driver with a spotless record might not be the best choice as a driver. Some people have a hard time transporting children or elderly, or get nervous when anyone else is in the vehicle. If they get easily distracted or you observe erratic driving behavior and/or violations of the rules, it might be best to sit down and talk, to either fix the problem or replace the driver.

Listen to the passengers, talk to other drivers and observe. You can learn a great deal this way and can follow up with discussions. The key is not to wait until a driver causes an accident or has a real problem. By having a systematic method of driver evaluation, you can make sure you always have the best driver available.

Often, church leaders complain that they don't have enough drivers. By lifting the standards and recognizing your drivers occasionally for a good, safe driving record, you can sometimes increase those willing to help. Once again, it shows how much you value the people of the church and point to those ways you are caring for them.

The Ministry Protection Memo (MPM) series is offered as an educational tool in support of AME Zion property and casualty insurance program to help you develop loss control

